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"The Ring"

(A Story from the Hitler Years)

By Klaus Stern

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"The Ring" (Summary)

(A story from the Hitler years)

Heinz and a much younger sister grow up in Berlin, Germany during the Hitler years. His father, a merchant and veteran of World War one, is a proud German citizen of Jewish faith. His mother, coming from a refined family, tries to bring up the family in a pleasant atmosphere. They belong to many different organizations and are well liked in their circle of friends.

Gradually this changes - organizations don't renew memberships, old friends stop calling and are afraid to be seen with them. In school fellow students gang up on Heinz and make life miserable for him. In 1937 Heinz celebrates his Bar Mitzvah and receives many gifts, but his most treasured one is a gold ring given to him by his widowed maternal grandmother.

In November 1938 the secretary of the German embassy in Paris is killed by a young Polish Jew, whose parents were expelled from Germany. A day later the Nazis roam through the cities, destroying Jewish property, and setting fire to synagogues all over Germany. Mass arrests of Jews follow, with those arrested being brought to nearby concentration camps.

To save at least the Jewish children, the British start a program bringing children over to their country, to live with foster parents. Heinz' parents, mainly through his mother's urging, decide to send the boy to England, to be sure that at least one of the family will be safe. But despite all the occurences and the special ordinances for Jews, Heinz' father still insists that this can't go on for long and that Hitler's regime will soon collapse and a new one restore order as it was before.

After closing all Jewish businesses in 1939, Heinz' parents are forced

to go to a nearby farm, then are replaced by captured Ukrainians in 1943 and deported to Auschwitz. After terrible experiences and almost being gassed, Heinz' father survives and goes illegally to Palestine.

Meanwhile, Heinz grows up in England, is drafted and sent to the Middle East with the British Mandatory Army. During streetfights between Arabs and Jews, Heinz' father is severely wounded. The onrushing English troops try to restore peace and take the wounded people to a hospital. While being helped to an ambulance, the dying man recognizes the ring on the soldier's finger. In this way father and son meet after so many years and Heinz promises his dying father that after finishing his time in the army, he will return to Palestine and as the only survivor of his family help build up the country.

"The Ring" (A story from the Hitler years)

To whom it may concern:

My name is Alfred. Thanks to the writer of this story I am alive today. It was he who held me back from jumping out of a cattle car to my certain death while being transported from Gleiwitz to Mauthausen.

Through circumstances which will become clear as you read the journal, I came into possession of this document in the beginning of 1948.

In order to make what follows more understandable, I will have to fill in some background information. But all this was told to me by the journal's author and his son, Heinz.

Heinz and a much younger sister grew up in Berlin, Germany during the Hitler years in a middle class Jewish family. His father, a veteran of the first World War and a recipient of the iron cross, who lost one brother in the field and has another brother, who was an officer, a rarity in those times, was a so-called proud "German citizen of Jewish faith."

His mother came from a family with sons who were a doctor, a pharmacist, and an architect, and two daughters who were married to doctors. She was much more open to Judaism than his father. They belonged to many different clubs and organizations, Jewish and non-Jewish, and moved in a circle of refined friends and acquaintances. This worked out fine until the times Hitler came to power and little by little they found themselves excluded from meetings and gatherings. Long time friends asked them not to greet them in the open because having connections with "Nichtariers"

(non-Aryans) - Jews and other not true German races - might endanger their jobs and standing in the community.

The year is 1937. Heinz is going to have his Bar Mitzvah. His mother is much more interested than his father and does all the necessary preparations, to make it a special day for Heinz to remember for the rest of his life. She invites relatives and friends to help celebrate the occasion. Some uncles and aunts come from other cities, but his old and sickly widowed grandmother can't travel anymore, and instead sends along as her Bar Mitzvah gift to Heinz what is by now a family tradition - all her other grandsons received it also - a ring. The big day arrives and with it gifts from all over, but Heinz' most treasured gift is the ring from his grandmother.

Times are getting darker. Heinz' father comes home telling about incidents he experienced at the office and in his business relations at restaurants, etc. His mother tells of some stores letting her know in a peculiar way, that her business isn't wanted anymore. And in school some of his former good friends gang up against him and other Jewish classmates. But his father still insists these are isolated personal incidents and the well-educated, cultured mass of the German people won't take it much longer, and that a change for the better will come soon.

Then in November 1938, the secretary of the German embassy in Paris, von Rath, is killed by a young Jewish man who is enraged that his parents and other Polish Jews were expelled from Germany. Jews all over Germany are disturbed by headlines and radio reports, fearing the worst. They don't have to wait long. November 9, 1938 is the target day, the day the Nazis have waited for to show the nation, what had been planned for years. The boycott against Jewish business in 1933 was just a token of what was going to happen now.

In the early afternoon "The Brownshirts" - the S.A. - roams through the streets, destroying Jewish property, smashing the windows of every known Jewish business. And in the evening the skyline is reddened from the flames of burning synagogues, set on fire by screaming inspired mobs. The timid Jewish community sits at home wondering what else is going to happen. Some of the older citizens mutter about how anybody would dare to destroy buildings of prayer, Jewish or non-Jewish. But everybody is afraid to open their mouth and do something about it. Others "predict" that Hitler will never be re-elected.

The very next day the mass arrest of Jews in every district of the city begins. Some are brought to the Gestapo Headquarter at Alexanderplatz, others to nearby concentration camps. The nearest one to Berlin is Sachsenhausen, or a little bit farther, Buchenwald. Some elderly Jews are held for only a couple of weeks, but come home with broken health from all the shock and exposure and many perish right then. Others are forced to sell their business as fast as possible, or else they will be sent back to the camps. And a third group of the arrested are given 48 hours to leave the country or they can expect the worst. The ones of the last group rush home, have 2 suitcases packed, are given an emergency visa to Shanghai or maybe to the United States by the Jewish Federation, and shipped out to save their necks.

Heinz goes to visit a recently widowed aunt, who lives in one of the better districts in West Berlin. Since the death of her husband she moved in with her two brothers, who are bachelors, to keep the house for them. While Heinz is there a loud knocking on the door interrupts the conversation and two men from the Gestapo ask to come in. They want to know where her

two brothers, who are prominent businessmen are. After being told that they are still at the office, one of the men grabs the telephone, dials and asks for one of the brothers. "Hello Sol, I am at your sister's place and I sure would like to see you. Who I am, well we didn't see each other for a long time. Why don't you and Harry hurry home as fast as possible. I will wait for you here. You both will be surprised to see me."

After waiting for some time, they finally leave the apartment, telling the aunt they have some business waiting for them but that they will be back, and how lucky Heinz is to be that young otherwise they would arrest him also.

After the Gestapo leaves, the aunt hurriedly packs a small suitcase with the most essential things, scrapes together all the cash she can find and tells Heinz to run to the nearby subway to meet her brothers and tell them what happened and not to come home. Heinz runs to the subway, tells his uncles what went on in the apartment and rushes back to his aunt. Later the Gestapo returns asking again for the brothers, smirking "well that's alright, somebody else got them in the meantime."

As we find out later on, Heinz' uncles took a trainride to a city about 6 hours away, renewing the tickets in the train with different conductors for 3 days, thus escaping the wave of arrests.

The next day Heinz walks through the streets looking at the destroyed windows of home and businesses of Jewish people on his way to the synagogue. The roof of the building is gone, so are most of the walls and the rows of seats. But somehow the holy ark where the Torah scrolls are kept, wasn't touched at all. The S.S. and many curious onlookers stand around. Heinz who doesn't look too Jewish tries to go near the ark to take one scroll home to save it, but is rebuked by the S.S. telling him not to touch that Jewish

stuff, which is the work of the devil.

For some unknown reason the nearby international express train, Paris-Berlin-Moscow comes to a complete standstill, the international travelers rush to the windows and take pictures of the destroyed house of worship. The S.S. is furious but in this case powerless.

In the next few days new ordinances appear in the newspapers. Jews are required to bring all their valuables, such as jewelry, cameras, paintings, etc. to the nearest district office, to do penance for the killing of von Rath. Not fulfilling these orders will bring more arrests. To avoid more tragedy, Heinz' worried mother delivers the family valuables as ordered.

Another ordinance that Jews can't go to the movies, Theatre, concerts, etc. anymore follows. And in all that excitement Heinz' father still maintains that this time the Nazis went too far and the average German citizen won't go for this much longer, and if he and his family really have to leave Germany, it will be with the last train.

In spring 1939 all Jewish businesses have to be closed and sold. Businesses, some worth millions, have to be given away for a ridiculous price to members of the Nazi party. After selling one's business, or like most of the Jews, losing his job, one is forced to report to the nearest employment office for roadwork or other construction work. For many who were employed in stores, banks, as accountants, etc., this is a sudden change and is hard to take. Some see the green light and start making preparations to leave Germany for good. But there are many left who have no connections at all to go anywhere.

A great aunt of Heinz, living in America, promises to send the family an affidavit. But the waiting list for an affidavit number to obtain a U.S.

visa is very long. And there is hardly any hope to get out in time. But not everything is lost. In December 1938, thanks mostly to the help of England, a movement for the "Care of Children from Germany" is formed, which arranges the immigration to England of Jewish children, whose parents have no other means and ways to get out of Germany. These children are temporarily lodged with foster parents. By September 1939, nearly 10,000 children, 90% Jewish, are saved by this generous action. After many long discussions Heinz' parents decide that the best thing to do, is to send Heinz with the next children's transport to England. At the train station one can witness many tearful goodbyes of parents and children. Heinz says goodbye to his parents and little sister who he might never see again. But at least with their son safe, the family can wait and hope, that the Nazi regime will soon collapse.

Shanghai, China is willing to take immigrants without a visa for the time being. Many people with no other connection take advantages of this offer. As we find out later about 20,000 were saved this way and housed in an International Settlement. In the meantime the Germans issue a new regulation, saying that Jews under the age of 45 years are no longer eligible to leave the country.

Also in January 1939 the "Kitchener Camp for the Poor Person" opens up in Richborough in Kent, England. Over 3000 Jews from Germany are temporarily housed, pending immigration to other countries. In addition, all of a sudden you hear the names of South American countries who might take some immigrants coming up in conversations. But these countries want professionals like cabinet makers, locksmiths, welders and most of all farmers. In Berlin itself exists such a trade school supported for years by the Jewish Federation and many Jews of all ages sign up to take speed courses to learn these

trades, for may be there is a chance left to leave Germany in time.

There also exists a big farm, near Berlin owned by a Jewish man who lives now in the United States, where people are instructed in all aspects of agriculture and trained to be real farmers. In earlier years some groups of these new farmers went on Aliyah to Palestine, and others to Argentina. Heinz' parents decide to take up farming; maybe that will provide a way to get out of Germany.

But farming isn't as easy as it looks. One gets up early in the morning, works all day in the fields, rain or shine. And the Polish instructor isn't very pleasant to work for. All day one has to listen to the same words: "All you can do is eat and shit, but you people will never learn how to work hard." But one gears himself as well as possible to make a physical change from merchant to farmer. The women work in the large nursery, henhouses and households.

In September 1939, Hitler attacks Poland, declares war on France and England and pulls other countries into the Second World War. Heinz' parents go to Berlin once in a little while to see old friends. But some are missing - either they had a chance to leave the country or, what first is just a rumor but later becomes a fact, are taken to the east for "Einsatzarbeit," replacement for soldiers who have to go to front to "defend" the Third Reich. Some air raids have taken their toll, big apartment houses and city buildings are damaged. Some people already have lost all their belongings, but who cares since Hitler is going to take over all Europe and everything will be alright. After such air raids, even when one has to spend all night in bomb shelters, one had better show up for work in the morning or else is reported as a traitor to the Gestapo and everybody knows what that means.

The farm is seized all of a sudden and put under Nazi-Farmers control.

The number of people living on the farm has grown to about 200 people of all ages. They are living together like a little town sharing the daily good and bad news together, hoping for a chance to leave Germany. Food rationing has started and, for instance, the farm which turns out thousands of eggs every week, is allowed to keep only 1 egg per person. Everything else like milk, vegetables, potatoes, etc. has to be sent to the nearby city, to keep Germany strong. The work gets harder and harder. Nearby farmers whose sons or husbands are sent to the front ask for help to keep their farms going and our big farm has to supply the help. And if one can't do the job as requested, he is reported to the Gestapo and that means deportation to the east. People who come back from a visit from Berlin bring the bad news, that deportations to concentration camps in Poland have begun. Names like Piaski, Balzec and later Auschwitz coming up, names of places you never heard of. Of course we living on the farm, doing the hard work as requested, feel pretty safe for the time being. In the meantime Germany has gone to war against Russia and we can hear the bombs exploding in the nearby cities. But the hard work must go on.

Then in September 1941 one of the most repressive ordinances against the Jewish citizens is proclaimed: the bearing of the "Judenstern." This is a black star of David, printed on a yellow background, which has to be sewn on to every piece of garment and worn all the time. You'd better not get caught without it or...

The star meant being put at the end of a line to purchase your daily groceries which were already rationed, or in case of shortages a person wearing the Judenstern was told, "come back some other time, first come our Germans." With that the Jewish people were issued new identification cards with the middle-name for men ISRAEL and for the women SARAH. What else would

the Nazis think of...

In June 1941 Germany declares war on Russia after she had signed a phony non-aggression pact. The German army is very successful in the first few months and conquers Russian territory in a Blitzkrieg (unexpected attacks all over). They overrun the Ukraine in no time and bring its male citizens, mostly uneducated farmers, back to Germany, to replace the German farmers, who are badly needed on the Eastern and Western fronts.

In spring 1943 suddenly Heinz' parents and all the other Jews are replaced with Ukrainian farmers. The Gestapo from Berlin shows up and hands out to everyone a form stating the "because of hostile intrigues against the German state and connections to the communistic party I am a traitor and have to leave Germany. For these reasons I have no more rights to my property and any other possessions." This form has to be signed by everyone; fathers are told to sign for their children, even little babies. That meant deportation to the east any day.

Alfred: Up until this point I have had to play the role of narrator. But now I will let the true narrator of this story tell his own tale.

"A few days later we are transported to Berlin to a big headquarters for resettelement to the East. In a place like this one meets all kinds of people; young, old, sick, fearful, but some are still proud, telling the others that everything will turn out alright. We meet 2 young men with shorn hair, escapees from AUSCHWITZ, telling others how bad it is, that as soon as you arrive in camp you lose all your belongings. Hardly anybody believes them. That's impossible, how can one human being do this to another.

Today is April 19, 1943, one day before Hitler's birthday. The Gestapo and the S.S. put together one of the biggest transports, going east,

as a present to the "Fuehrer." The S.S. guards load about 50 to 70 men, women and children into each cattle car, calling us by the worst names and using cow-whips to hurry things up. Little by little one can feel that things are getting worse, but even this is no comparison to what awaits us at the end of our journey, if the Auschwitz escapees are correct.

Slowly the train of cattle cars moves through the night. It is pitch dark in our car, I set next to my wife and little daughter on the straw covered floor. Next morning around 10 a.m. the train comes to a sudden stop and the taller men start looking through a little opening way high on the wall. In the distance one can see some barracks and high fences of barbed wire. Nearby we notice men walking around in striped uniforms. This gives me a funny feeling: first the rumors we might go to Auschwitz, now the gray barracks and people running around in striped uniforms...of course I keep my thoughts to myself, not telling my wife what I am thinking. But I can tell the way she looks at me, that she also knows that something is very wrong. The train moves again to a small station closer to the barracks.

But there is not much time to think. The big doors of the cattle cars are opened and orders like "get out you damn Jews, hurry up, the vacation is over" etc. are the words greeting us. The S.S. are using the whips again to push us around. One guard orders us to put our belongings on one big pile and that we had better hurry up. Another guard screams at us "men on one side of the station, women on the other side." They even sort women with smaller children to another spot. Everything goes so fast, one doesn't even have a chance to say goodbye.

We are loaded on big open trucks, about 50 men per truck. After a distance of about 4 kilometers we land in BUNA MONOWITZ, part of Auschwitz. The trucks are speeding through a big gate, fenced around with barbed wire, highly electrified with manned watchtowers every 100 or so yards. We are rushed to a large field for roll-call. We arrive in the camp with only about 350 men. The older ones and not so strong looking arrivals never see the camp; they are, as we later find out, "put away" by the S.S. guards. We are brought to a tremendous big bathroom. Now the commands really start: "Put your money on one pile, your watches and rings on another. If we find any item on you, you'll receive 25 thrashings over your ass." "Strip naked, go in line to have all your hair shorn to the skin of your head." "get in line to be disinfected." "Now hurry up and get your camp number tattooed into your left arm." I receive the No. 117033 and I have no more name. Then the capos push us into the showers and after that send us running naked to the barracks through the cold air.

Everyone receives a bundle of so called clothing. A thin jacket and thin striped pants, patched up thin underwear and shoes with wooden soles. No sock, instead we are given some piece of material to wrap around our feet. Some fellow inmates receive 2 left or 2 right shoes, not even the same size. We sleep in bunk beds 3 high, I get the middle one.

We get our first "dinner" - watery soup with a few thin slices of potatoes. But we don't have enough tin dishes, so we get one dish for 6 men. What one does since we also have no spoons, is to just shovel the soup down his throat and give the dish to the next guy. Oh yes, I almost forgot. Later on "the blockelder" gives everyone a spoonful of thinned down marmelade as dessert. But there is only one spoon handy right now.

So again we stay in line, 200 of us and have a spoon shoved down our throat. Finally at 10 p.m. the camp bell sounds and the first night of our new existence begins. But even if one is dead tired, he is too excited to sleep.

Isn't life paradoxical. Tonight is the first Seder night and according to the Bible that was the night the Israelites celebrated their newly gained freedom, from oppression and slavery under king Pharaoh. And for us it is the beginning of an experience nobody could ever imagine or has heard of. On top of it all, the madman who initiated the program of destroying European Jewry for good, is celebrating his birthday this very day in Berlin.

21st of April: This is my very first day in camp. I awake early after tossing around most of the night. I have pains in my back. I must have caught a cold in my kidneys in the cattle car on the way to camp. During roll call I report sick and I am sent to a doctor. We have to wait for hours in a small courtyard surrounded with barbed wire in the cold and fog. The doctor, also an inmate, gives me a quick examination. Yes I have the beginning of a kidney infection, but here in camp that is not a sickness. You'd better not bother to report sick again for a case like that.

By walking around camp I come to a bathroom. I see a pile of clothing on the floor. I find a pullover and cold as I am grab it and put it on. If I had only known at the time what I was going into...In the evening I proudly show my friends what I had acquired and they tell me: boy you are right for the camp - do anything to make life easier for yourself.

The next few days and nights I have a terrible itching all over my

body and can hardly sleep. I have lice. The clothing I found in the bathroom was ready to be sent for dis-infection.

The next day I march out to work. I am put in the "cable commando," a group of about 650 people. We have to dig trenches, pull cables and carry bricks all day long, always under the eyes of the S.S. and Kapos. The first few weeks are alright, but little by little that daily watersoup and the small dry bread ration gets you down. You can count the ribs on your body more and more. I had to work in this commando 7 long months. Many of my fellow inmates, who arrived with the same transport I did, couldn't take it any longer. First they got sick, or some actually starved to death or got so weak that they were sent to Auschwitz (Birkenau) which automatically meant death.

After about 2 weeks we have to move to another block (barracks) to make room for another transport. We have to move at night - that way we don't miss time working and why do we have to sleep that much anyway? The "blockelder" is a "Greener," that means he carries the green triangle which makes him a criminal inmate. It doesn't take much time to find out he is many times worse than the S.S. He likes to push us around, shorten our anyhow small bread and soup rations. But his greatest pleasure is to let us run around the barracks, then inside, get on our beds - then under our beds. And when we are laying on the floor out of breath, deadtired, he likes to run over our skinny bodies.

During a lice control which every barrack has from time to time, they find lice on me. This is a no no here in camp. They call the campelder, a man built like a football player, to report me and he takes a gardenhose and lets me have it all over, so that I don't know whether I am coming or going. My back is a mess and it takes days before I can walk correctly again.

After weeks I am moved to a different barrack and that means into another commando, the so called Schlosser-commando, or mechanic commando. We are working now for the I.G. Farbenindustrie and have to erect scaffoldings for towers and bridges and lay pipes. This kind of work often has to be done high above the ground, with nothing to hold on to. I am not the type of person who can work high up in the air without getting dizzy, but you get so fed up with everything and I. don't give a damn whether I fall down and break my neck or not. But at least this kind of work is physically easier than working in the cable commando. In fact this work saved my life for the time being. I don't know how long I would have lasted in the other kind of work.

Another advantage is, that we work sometimes with regular employees and English P.O.W. The soldiers understand our predicament and give us moral support as much as possible. They keep us informed about the latest setbacks of the German Army, which in turn gives us a small spark of hope that we might regain our freedom one of these days.

The campelder tries hard to keep our spirits up. On Sundays he organizes soccer games, boxing and has the camp orchestra play for us. But I am too undernourished to participate in any of the games. I sit in a corner and listen to the music.

Since our camp gets more and more new deportees the selections of those still in good enough shape to do a full days work increase. Selection and Birkenau become a matter of common knowledge. If you are a so called "Muselmann," which means you are just about skin and bones, you are ready for the "Himmelfahrtskommando" (the commando for the skies-ready to be gassed). Thank God, because of the work I am doing right now I am still able to pass the selections.

On the farm, where we worked before the deportation to Auschwitz, we had a religious group, "Agudas Israel," working together with us. They asked for permission not to work on Saturdays and to work on Sundays instead. This request was granted by the inspector in charge of the farm, because on a farm there is always work to be done, like feeding the live stock or cleaning the barns, etc. They kept kashrut (kosher) as well as possible, and also tried to observe the Jewish holidays over the years. When we arrived altogether in camp, they tried to keep it that way. The first few weeks they exchanged our meager sausage ration for some jam or bread, until we urged them to give it up; God will forgive them, because here in camp everything is different than anything we knew before. They listened to us, until the first Yom Kippur, in Buna Monowitz arrived.

The other day Jossel and Leo approached me and asked whether I would be willing to help them and the other friends from the religious group to observe Yom Kippur. That means fasting all day even while we worked and taking our first meal again after we come back from work. I tried to talk both out of it, but they were so insisting and pleading with me, that I finally gave in and promised, that they could count on me.

Well one of them goes to the "Blockelder" and tells him of the request to keep our food ration for the next night and then to hand it out to us. The "blockelder" thinks we are plain nuts; he never heard of such a request in his life. He finally grants it, but tells us that if he catches any of us eating during the day behind his back he is not only taking the entire food ration away from us, but also will report us to the S.S. because nobody, but nobody would make a fool out of him.

Well what a Yom Kippur day that was. Getting up, watching all the others

eat, answering questions: how come you guys don't eat and still work at I.G. Farben all day. I don't know how we made it, but we arrived back in camp exhausted and dead tired. After roll call the blockelder calls us to get our food ration, but Jossel asks him to wait a little longer, first we want to say a few prayers before we eat. The blockelder can't believe his ears. Here is a group of people working all day without any food and now wanting to pray before they eat. Even this man, who is a tough inmate and often mean to us, has a sudden change of heart and gives us not only our own food ration but adds some extra food to it.

I lost track of both Jossel and Leo after that, but I know they didn't make it much longer.

The winter of 1943-44 is a tough one. The cold season starts here much earlier, because we are nearer to the Beskide chain of mountains. These long roll calls in the mornings and after work in the evenings, sure get you down. The S.S. lets you stay for hours in the cold and wind just for the fun of it. Oh yes, because of the cold we receive a torn sweater and a thin blue-gray striped coat. Most of us have wooden sole shoes, no socks, just wrap around rags to protect us from the bitter winter cold. Day in, day out, rain or snow, we march out 7 o'clock in the morning, work our asses off and return back to camp at seven in the evening. Our uniforms are wet and the next day in the morning we put the same wet uniforms on again. How long can our half starved body take this? Inflamation of the lungs and diarrhaea of the worst kind soon follow.

Our camp depends on steam-heat which is piped in from the I.G. Works. That means the camp kitchen depends on it, also our barracks for heat. If sometimes something is wrong with the system, our water soup is cold and we sit with our cold and wet uniforms in the unheated barracks. Christmas we get

as a "present" a smaller ration of the watersoup, because on that day no steam was produced.

February is really the worst month of this winter-season. Plenty of snow and icy rain-storms sweep in from the Beskides and make our lives a living hell. In the last couple of days we have especially long roll calls as a punishment, because some Polish inmates "took off." As I mentioned before we stay in our thin wet uniforms for hours, and in wooden shoes without socks. Many of us get frostbite on our toes. Boy, are we waiting for the first warm Spring days! But every day seems like an eternity. Many of the people you work with day for day can't take it anymore, and even the ones who appeared much stronger then the rest of us just collapse at work or at roll call from the inadequate rest and food and are carted off. Their bodies are transported to the crematory ovens, the customary extermination. Other inmates are driven to suicide by dashing through the guards provoking death by rifle shots or hurl themselves into the high tension electrically charged barbed wire fences.

Finally the month of March arrives and with it the first warm sunny days, which lifts up our spirits. Again we look more hopeful to the future. And then little by little they take these cocky young S.S. guys off our backs and send them to the Eastern front, where they are badly needed, and replace them with older guards. The older guards have a little bit more understanding for our predicament.

At this time I started to get the first case of carbuncles, an infection of the skin, maybe from the bad food or the tension of our daily life. I get pimples filled with pus first under my arms, then all over my back. Every time I move my arms I have a painful burning and throbbing and I suffer from head-aches. But I am afraid to report sick, one never knows what they can do for

you. But then I develop a really big and painful carbuncle on my neck and I can't stand it anymore and report to the "Krankenbau," the camp hospital. The doctor, also an inmate from Czechoslovakia, takes a quick look and tells me that in order to help me, he has to cut the carbuncle out. He puts me on a long table on my stomach, puts a belt fastened to the table around my body and calls two other men to hold me down. Then with no anaesthetics at all he takes a sharp knife, makes two criss cross cuts in the back of my neck and lifts the carbuncle out. I scream like a bull from the pain. He only looks at me saying he is sorry we have no narcotics here to work with, puts a paper bandage around my neck and tells me to lay down. After a few days they kick me out of the so-called hospital; they need room for others. That was my first operation here and I hope I don't have to go back in there. As a momento I have a big ugly scar left on my neck.

April 1944: We had one of these selections again. Because of all the water soup and general nutrition I develop hydrocephalus, water in my head. Other inmates have it in their stomach or legs, but I happen to have it in my head. Every morning for a few hours I have a big head and face and over the course of the day it gets back to normal. As funny as it sounds this saves my life. Through my infection with carbuncles and starvation diet I lost more and more weight and during the selection my number, tattooed on the arm, was marked down. Next morning after roll call we are asked to step aside and wait for more orders later on. After everybody marched away for work, we are informed, that due to our deficient appearance, we are unable to do a days work and will be transported to Birkenau. We are all in great shock! BIRKENAU means death in the gaschambers...

But the trucks which are supposed to transport us to Birkenau are late for some unexplained reasons. This was my lucky moment. Here I am standing with my big head, looking well nourished because of the water build up, between all these skinny inmates. Pretty soon a colonel of the S.S. comes by and looks us "Muselmen" over. He soon spots me and screams at me: "What in hell are you doing in that pile of misery, don't you know this group here goes to Birkenau to be gassed? Get the hell back to your barrack before I report you." I am speechless and turn around as fast as possible and run back to my barrack. And thus, as I said before, my "waterhead" saved my life.

In the evening my fellow inmates look at me wondering how I ever escaped certain death in the gaschambers, where millions were methodically killed. Even after telling them my story, they keep on wondering.

In the meantime, Germany suffers one set-back after another on the different fronts. Italy, as the English P.O.W.'s tell us is as good as defeated, and the Russians are closing in on the Eastern Front. And they also tell us of a planned invasion in France. Full of hope we listen to all these reports.

We have the first air-raids of I.G. Farben. When the first alarm sounds the civil workers run like mad to the shelters. We inmates on the other hand couldn't care less, hoping every bomb will be a direct hit. During the air-raids we don't have to work, which gives us an extra rest, and many times we fall asleep while the bombs are falling. We are so weak and undernourished, that we sometimes hope a bomb will hit us and put an end to our misery. But a siren sounds the air-raid is over and sighing we return to work.

As I mentioned before, I am working in the "Mechanic Commando" and

we have to go to work every day, including Sundays, even though the other inmates had every other Sunday off. But this Sunday in August was different. On the way to work, we already hear detonation from far away. I am busy getting our tools together and the noise like thunder gets louder and louder but who cares. In other air-raids there was always enough time to put the entire works under the protection of an artificial fog. This work here, is very important for the German war machine, because here we produce Methyl Alcohol, a substitute for gasoline, and synthetic rubber and this is well known to the allied forces. Well, today there wasn't enough time to protect the works, and before we knew it the attacking planes were over us. They flew so low over our heads and attacked everything in sight with machine guns. Windows shatter, walls collapse, there was no time to run to the next air-raid shelter.

So we jumped into nearby trenches and watched the whole excitement. As soon as the first attack was over, our kapo (foreman) ordered us to run to the next air-raid shelter, but I must say we were content to stay right where we were. He called us all kind of names and started accusing us of giving signs to the enemy, which is treason and could cost us our lives. Who cares, they didn't give a damn about us, all they care about is having bodies working for I.G. Farben.

Still, we had better follow orders and ran to the shelter. Before we arrived there another attack started and a bomb went right in the very trench where we were sitting a minute before. But there was no time to wonder. Before we arrived in the shelter we had to find our way through broken windows piles of bricks and collapsed scaffoldings. Another wall collapsed nearby and I threw myself on the ground, and rolled my body together in order to protect myself. After the eventful air-raid we were called together

picked up the wounded and dead fellow inmates. Boy what a day that was.

Another air-raid followed nearby where most of our women were working and it also did a lot of damage. We think a lot about our dear ones, who are only a few miles away from us and have to go through the same privations and punishments as we do. How are they holding out? Are they going to make it?

After those air-raids the steam system doesn't work, which means we don't get any warm food in the evenings. All we receive is our meager bread-ration of 20 gramme in the morning, work all day and return at night to the cold unheated barracks. We sit close together to fight the cold and crawl later in our straw filled mattress beds, trembling because of the cold, and too hungry to fall asleep.

Today is the 20 of July. At night time we are laying already on our beds but then all of a sudden something is in the air. First an icy silence, then a whisper--what is the news? Somebody put a bomb in Hitler's head-quarters. Hitler and some of his fellow Nazi generals are dead. Well, we already see ourselves as free people again, there will be a revolution in the army and the war will be over in no time at all.

But the next day the news isn't so good; ~~what a disappointment~~ Hitler is still alive. They caught the guilty ones, they will be sentenced to death. Another one of our dreams is shattered.

Now almost day by day the air-raids continue. In one of them I was lucky again. During that air-raid we were sitting in the basement of a phosphorus producing plant and three direct hits demolished the three story high building. But the basement held out...

Because of the almost daily attacks and confusion all over, the bread

delivery is often late and the kitchen can't function without the steam, and many times we march out to work without a bite to eat. But the campelder in agreement with the S.S. is so "gracious" he forgets about the long roll calls in the evening and we are counted as we return from work and march through the gate. But they make up for it on Saturday and Sunday. On these days the S.S. with the highest titled officers appear before us, bring in a few of the inmates who tried to escape from the camp over the week, and read an order from Reichsfuehrer of the S.S. Himmler, who orders these unlucky fugitives to be hung. This proclamation is read in German and in Polish to be sure everybody understands this and to make everybody think twice before taking off. This drama goes on almost every week.

It's late fall of 1944 and we have to face another of those fierce cold winters again. Many of us wonder how we will be able to survive another one like that. But it is surprising how much a human being can endure.

On the 6th of January 1945 the Russians start their main assault near the Weichsel river on the Eastern front. In forced march their troops come closer to the city of Cracow, which will effect our camp in some way.

Of all things I had to get sick with high fever that turned out to be inflamation of the lungs. Why did I have to get sick right now in these important times? A brother of a friend of mine works here in the camp hospital and really does everything to get me well. In the evening fellow inmates visit me and tell me how mean the S.S. acts now knowing how close the Russians are. I got kind of restless and wanted to get out of there as soon as possible. Another evening a friend of mine tells me he heard rumors, that we are going to evacuate our camp on the 18th of January and that the S.S. has in mind to

kill all the sick inmates left in hospital and burn the corpses in the crematory ovens - this way the Russians will never find out what happened here in camp. That is the last warning for me and I do everything to get out of here and finally get released on the 16th of January.

The rumors turn out to be right. Buna Monowitz has to be evacuated. You can feel it in the air. There is an unrest throughout the camp. The kapos and blockelders are especially mean and nervous, we receive a small loaf of bread and a blanket and are told to be ready any time to leave the camp. At night there are some more air-raids supported by underground fighters, to hurry up the offensive.

Well, the 18th of January arrives, it is a Thursday. We get up earlier than usual. The transport is supposed to leave at 9:00 a.m. We are now all excited and worried. What are they going to do with us?---Slowly the time passes. 7:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m., nothing happens. Finally we find out that the guards who are supposed to watch us during the march--took off, scared of the oncoming Russian army. So we can leave the camp, maybe a break for us?

In the meantime the detonations are getting louder and seem to come closer. Wouldn't that be something if the Russians would take our camp over, before the S.S. has a chance to put us on the transport? The highways are crowded anyway with some of the German army retreating.

In the afternoon, middle of the distribution of our meager bread ration, the camp-bell suddenly rings - get ready for roll call. It's 4:00 p.m. and that means TRANSPORT. What happened is that the S.S. just grabbed some of the retreating soldiers from the highways and forced them to help watch our transport. You can tell on their faces how sick and tired they are of the whole war after one defeat after another. And even the most

ardent supporters of Hitler have to admit that the war is almost lost.

At 5:00 p.m. with music furnished by the camp orchestra we leave the camp. We pass the camp-commandant at the gate, the other S.S. guards are busy destroying files and other important documents and set fire to them. This way the Russians might not find out what these bastards did to us. The flames of the many piles blaze towards the sky in the darkness. If they could only talk. The flames would tell of the newly arrived names, changed to numbers tattooed on our left arms making us work like animals under the worst conditions. If one couldn't take it anymore and collapsed and perished the file would show: died of pneumonia or shot when tried to escape. Or if one froze to death or had enough of all the privation and punishment and ran into the high tension electrically charged barbed wire fence, all it would show: inmate died of Typhus epidemic. This way the outside world will never find out what really happened here in Buna Monowitz.

Its a bitter cold night, about 10-15 degrees above. We are supposed to march to another concentration camp 75 kilometers away - GLEIWITZ. Many of us in bad shoes have a heck of a time not to slip on those icy highways. Many of us think that maybe we will all end up in the gaschambers. Some times the march comes to a stop - we have to let the retreating soldiers pass us. Finally, after hours we are allowed to rest in a village called Nicolai. The first few hours you try your best to keep up with the march. But after a while some of our fellow inmates just don't have the energy to keep up. They are pushed in to the nearest ditch and shot on orders of the S.S. At the next village we pass one guard ask for the mayor and order him to get rid of the corpses to hide the killings. But we are not the only ones getting tired. Some of the older guards order some of us to carry their rucksacks or rifles.

When one marches through the bitter cold night on a lonely highway, with the moon and stars on the clear sky high above him, he can't help to brood about his fate. What will be the end of it? Did it pay to survive all the chicanery? Where are our dear ones right now? Are they going to make it? A screaming command to hurry up or a kick brings him back to his present reality.

Many of us don't make it to Gleiwitz. The privation of the past and now on top of that the long march and bitter cold, is just too much. But there is much more to come. Good thing one can't foretell the future----

Late at night we finally arrive in Gleiwitz. Totally exhausted we just throw ourselves on the next best place available. After one day's "rest" in Gleiwitz - there is no room for us - we are loaded like a bunch of animals, without any food ration at all and in a cold of about 20 degrees, in open cattle cars. In my car are about 150 inmates standing squeezed together. We don't know where we are supposed to go. So we just travel day by day and night by night in the bitter cold, in open cattle cars without a crumb of bread. The only thing that keeps us going is snow which is falling most of the time; we just sip that down instead of water.

It is interesting what a human being can endure when necessary. Here we are in the bitter winter cold without any food for days already. At home when we left the house without a coat only for a few minutes, we wouldn't have heard the end of it. The world sure has changed.

Now we are told we are headed for the concentration camp MAUTHAUSEN bei Linz in Austria. But they don't want us; they are overcrowded already. Some fellow inmates try to climb out of the wagon. They are shot and killed. Reason: they tried to escape. Every day now we have corpses in the wagons. They die of starvation, pneumonia, or just freeze to death. Other weak ones are trampled upon or choke to death. Once in a little while the S.S. throw one loaf of bread in the car just for fun and watch us half-starved-to-death people fight with one another for just a crumb of it.

On one of these occasions a friend of mine from Berlin, a little older than the rest of us, tries to climb over the side of the cattle car to put an end to all his suffering. I hold him back with the little strength I have left in me, screaming at him to try and hold out just a little bit longer. He listens to me, hugs me and cries on my shoulder like a little boy.

But as the days go by we have more and more dead and dying people in our wagon. The S.S. orders us to keep the corpses until we come to a stop. Then they order us to throw them out and at the same time the so-called Muselmen (half starved inmates). Of course, most of us are too weak to lift anybody out, and who would volunteer to hand over a still living human being to be killed? The only thing we do do, and that brings out the animal in us, (or is this the will to survive?) is that we strip the shoes and warm clothes from the dead ones and exchange it with ours. After all, we need it more than they do. But in almost every wagon are some criminal inmates who follow orders. The guards put the dead and still living inmates side by side near a slope and the camp commandant Rakers and one of his S.S. "buddies" walk by the rows and "finish off" the still living inmates with a shot in the head.

Our trip lasted about ten days and when we finally "landed" in Sachsenhausen bei Oranienburg, our wagons are only half full. That trip took us through Austria, Czechoslovakia, back to Saxony. Inmates who left Buna in pretty fair condition, younger inmates who seemed to be tougher than the rest of us, died like flies. How I survived that far is a miracle to me.

From the wagon we miserable figures drag ourselves into the new camp. It's 10 o'clock in the evening. Our new quarters are an empty hall with a cement floor. We are told that we are going to receive some warm soup, our first warm meal in ten days. But we are more thirsty than anything else. I watch some Hungarian inmates try to knock out their gold tees, to exchange for some drinking water - clean or dirty, it doesn't matter. Just before "supper time" there is another air-raid and our supper won't be served until the next morning. Another night without food...

Next morning first roll call. Finally we get our soup, weak coffee and bread. Most of us try to exchange the soup for coffee, because our throats are so dry, we can hardly swallow the bread. Breakfast is consumed outside in a barbed wire court yard, on a cold February day. After hours outside, finally a chance to take a shower. Boy, that feels good. Many of us sip the warm water from the shower, we are so thirsty. Back to the hall on the thin straw covered floors for a rest. We don't feel the cold anymore, we are much too exhausted. The next few days the same rhythm. Getting up 4:30 a.m., roll call, have breakfast in the open air, sit or lay down on the cement floor and wait for the afternoon roll call.

But then the latest news hit the camp like a bomb. The Russian army has advanced to Frankfurt/Oder, only 150 kilometer from our camp. What now? Another problem for the S.S. - what to do with us. But don't worry Hitler has enough other concentration camps inside the Reich, far enough away from

the fronts.

After 12 days in Oranienburg we are loaded again during a snowstorm, this time into closed wagons. The trip takes only 1½ days. Again the Russians are so close and again a bunch of still ardent supporters of Hitler's dreams guard our transport to the next camp.

Concentration camp FLOSSENBUERG is located about 150 kilometers east of Nuremberg. It is built in the mountains in 2 or 3 terraces with an upper and lower camp. The main work there is in a quarry. Flossenbuerg is well-known as a camp which kills its prisoners by just pushing them off the cliffs, when they are not able to work anymore. Even the toughest criminals tremble when they hear that name. And that is our new "lodging."

The camp holds 16,000 inmates. Right after arriving at 10:00 p.m. the first thing is disinfection. After that into the different quarantine barracks, 4 men to a bed. The program here in this barrack is to get up, get ones bread ration, roll call and right back to bed, 4 men in each. The reason for going back to bed: that we "sow-bees" (our nickname), not dirty up the barracks.

After 14 days we are moved to other barracks. I have the misfortune to be sent to one of the worst barracks, No. 7. The 2 men in charge of the barracks are criminals and meaner than the S.S. The first few days they force us 65 men to squat for hours on the floor. If we murmur too much, one of the guys gets a pail of ice cold water and pours it over our group. A mean laughter is his answer to our screams.

Or these two devils let us stay outside in the cold all day, because we can't be used for heavy work right now. The barrack has bunk-beds 3 high 2 men to a bed, and houses 450 men. Since there is no more room for us, we have to sleep, believe it or not, under the beds, 7 men each without blankets.

We can harldy move. The "blockelder" comes by and screams: You should be thrashed like dogs and squeezed like sardines. Well, that thrashing he does very often, and gets a kick out of it.

Once in a while we can stay in the barrack during the day. If one of us sinks to the floor for being overtired, one of the 2 criminal prisoners comes and lets him have 25 blows on his behind, and sends him to the cold shower to wake up. If one gets sick and contracts pneumonia and latter on dies, his answer is: Well, this way we have an extra bread ration for us. And that was all there is to it.

During the day we have to get the soup and coffee rations in 50 gallon kettles from the kitchen in the lower part of the camp. Many of us are too weak to do this job. Just to spite us they pick the weakest ones to do the job. On the way back you have to climb 200 stairs back to the barracks with the heavy kettles. The load is heavy and if you happen to spill just a little bit of the soup you can expect some blows over your ass and no food for that evening. That goes on day after day.

This camp has an outside doctor, a surgeon who visits the camp every day. We miserable inmates are only guinea pigs for him. If one of us has blood poisoning in a finger, he amputates the finger. A few days later the hand, later part of the arm or the whole arm. He does the same thing with toes, feet and legs. In most cases he knows from the start how bad each case is, but chopping off one part after another from his "patient's" body is much more fun. Of course the surgery is done in the most primitive way. Who cares whether one makes it or not! And you have to have at least 102 degree temperature before he takes you into the "Krankenbau" - camp-hospital. And then 4 men in one bed, naked.

While I was there in Flossenbuerg, he had one of those selections. We are ordered to strip down all the way and march one by one before the doctor and the S.S. He gives us a quick looking over and writes with red paint on our foreheads high or low marks. I was lucky, I got 2-3----3-4 was bad which means ready to do away with you. This way the bastard of a doctor sends many uncounted human beings to a certain death, based just on how he feels. Oh yes, while being there in camp I see almost every day prominent Hungarians. One the Minister of Finance, one the Minister of Interior and a police chief. The only privilege they have is that they can wear beards and keep their hair. In that camp I spend about 6 long weeks.

The phrase "the wandering Jews" seems just right for us. Again we are moved to another camp. This time to concentration camp LEONBERG about 6 kilometers from Stuttgart. The camp isn't quite finished, but it has to take us anyway. Our kind of work is producing parts for fighter planes. The workshops are all underground, poorly lightened and with terrible air. But for us any hole is good enough as long as we produce. Our nourishment in the morning is black coffee, at noon watery soup and in the evening 200 grams of bread and once a week 20 grams of margerine. Not enough to live on, but too much to die---

Many of the inmates just starve to death with this kind of nourishment. At this time I have "Stubendienst" (roomservice) and my first job in the morning, even before breakfast, is to help carry out the bodies of inmates who died during the night. At this time I suffer from a bad case of diarrhaea and terrible stomach cramps, but I can't go into the Krankenbau - you have to have at least 102 degree temperature and there just isn't enough help to take care of all the sick inmates.

All of a sudden we are told "The Englaender" are only 40 kilometers away from the camp. They sure let you know that they are close by. Every day now the low flying fighter planes strafe our camp. If you don't die of starvation you might get it with a machine gun. And again in order not to let us fall into English hands, the S.S. decides to move us to another camp. As sick as I am I get ready for transport, this time to the notorious, and one of the first concentration camps erected in Germany, the infamous DACHAU. This camp, according to the S.S., wasn't in danger of any advancing allied troops. But in order not to overcrowd Dachau our transport is split into 2 parts, one to go there and the other part to transport to concentration camp KAUFERING, which was also known as one of the worst camps. And during these transports many fellow inmates don't make it anymore.

Since I was sick I had to go with the other sick inmates into a special wagon. Most of the sick ones have the same trouble I have - diarrhaea. There are no toilets in the wagons, just pails. And after they are full, that's that. In no time the pails are full to the rim and the sick ones too weak to at least go to a corner lay moaning on the floor in their own excrement. And little by little the stench in the wagon becomes unbearable. During a stop we are let out and I hear that at the next station the S.S. plans to unhook our wagon and "get rid of all of us" since we aren't able to work at all anymore. While there is a sudden disorder with planes over us and the S.S. already nervous I am able to sneak into another wagon. On the way we hear Dachau won't take us and our transport is diverted to a sidecamp of Dachau, concentration camp MUEHLDORF, 80 kilometer southwest of Munich. But in order to get into the camp one has to go through a selection; they don't want any sick or weak persons, they have enough of their own. What now???

The street to the camp is enclosed on both sides with barbed wire. We

stay in rows and are told to take our shirts off and wait until our turn comes. It's April and still pretty cold to stand half naked in the open air for hours. In front near the gate we can see the inmate doctors hastily examining the incoming inmates. Once in a while they yell for whoever is sick to come forward and say so to save all the extra time of the selection. But to come forward and admit to being sick or weak would be crazy, because doing so would mean certain death. As we called it "going to the Himmelfahrts-commando"--- to be gassed.

Anyway, I make up my mind I will never volunteer. It is still in the late afternoon and I slowly move up to the front. Little by little I let the other inmates pass me for selection. Another hour or so go by and in the meantime it gets dark and the doctors, tired and cold from sitting in the open rush to finish their dreadful job of deciding who is going to live or die. I can't hold back anymore and with all my strength, as sick as I feel, I march light-footed, like nothing is wrong with me, by these doctors. They give me a quick "look-over" and let me pass. Boy what a relief!

The first few days I am put in the clean-up commando in camp, later on cement work. One time during roll call the camp-commandant calls on me and speaks in a real Berliner dialect: "Mensch, you have jaundice." My answer in Berliner dialect: "I don't think so Herr Lagercommandant." Pleased that somebody is from Berlin - most of the others come from Eastern countries - he tells me to go to the Krankenbau, report his diagnose to the doctors, and report back to him.

Going back to the Krankenbau I report to the doctor and he wants to keep me right there. But first I have to report back: "Yes Herr Lagerkommandant I have the jaundice." --- What a circus!

I am working now in the clean-up commando. Every morning we march to the

Muehldorf train station, an important junction, to clear the tracks from the now almost nightly air-raids. The work is damn hard all day long and with that water soup we get we drag ourselves back the 6 kilometers to the camp. And at night more water soup and half rotted potatoe skins, rejects nobody else wants. But we are hungry, and rotted or moldy as the potatoes are, we shovel them down our throats.

Little by little I feel something is very wrong with me. I am dizzy and I know I have a fever and feel like throwing up all the time. But I am too scared to report sick, an inner voice tells me not to give up. Somehow I know they are going to kill all the sick inmates before moving again. I have an idea - the only one that might help me. Every day between roll call and marching out I steal myself away from the commando and hide all day long in the next ditch and rejoin the commando in the evening for roll call. This works alright for the next few days, but on April 28 I just collapse in the barracks and am brought with a high fever and the suspicion of having Typhus to the camp hospital. And the very same night the camp is being evacuated.

We are about 50 very sick inmates trembling not only from the high fever but worried about what the S.S. is going to do with us. Are they going to kill us all before the American troops arrive? As sick as everyone of us is, you can tell we all have the same question...

But soon anxiety changes to indifference. We are too sick to think, some of us pass out and sink into a deep sleep. And closer than anybody of us knows are the Americans, our liberators-----

I will never forget the 2nd day of May, 1945. I awaken from one of my feverish dreams. I am laying on a hard straw-filled mattress, covered with a thin blanket. Around me are other moaning and groaning inmates. We are in the so called "Krankenbau" sickhouse. If I have to die, so what one more

one less. Still I wonder what the S.S. is going to do with us. For days the rumors go around that if the camp has to be evacuated, all the sick and weak inmates will either be shot or gassed. I really don't care anymore, one can only take so much.

But around 10 in the morning there suddenly is whispering between the doctors and helpers. Something is in the air - are they going to decide what to do with us? Finally we are told that the Camp commandant and his S.S. staff fled last night and 2 of the guards were caught. Pretty soon detonations, not too far away. The noise gets louder, the barrack walls are shaking. The American troops advanced faster than expected, our luck. All Highways are surrounded and the roar of the tanks gets louder and louder. THE AMERICANS ARE COMING----

We are much too sick to understand what that means for us. But after a while we finally start to grasp the truth; we are free! Free from all the privations, punishments and humiliations of the last 2 years. These moments are hard to describe. We lift up our weak bodies, cry, scream, pray and sing. At this moment all the hardships are forgotten.

The first American troops arrive in camp and some of the soldiers enter our Krankenbau. We shout with joy. With tears in their eyes they shake our hands, never mind that we might have an infectious sickness. These soldiers are hard boiled fighting men, but I don't think they ever experienced anything like this before. Later we have a short thanksgiving service. All that excitement of the last few minutes, trying to get out of bed and screaming, are too much for us and exhausted we fall back into our beds. Many of us get real sick again, with rising temperatures. What a day that was!

The next few days bring more and more relief for us. We receive clean underwear, extra blankets and most of all decent meals again. But our starving

bodies can not yet take normal nourishment and most of us are transported by the army to a nearby hospital, 5 men to a room. Friendly army doctors take care of us and see to it, that we receive the right medication.

Today is my birthday, the first one as a free human being in years. While I was suffering in camp, I always hoped "to make it." Well I got my wish. I am still very weak from all the experiences of the last few months. My thoughts are with my wife and family. Did they also survive? About the fate of my parents I don't dare to think. But let's not complain today, so far I made it."

Alfred: While I only learned of the following details in Heinz' life later, it is necessary for the reader's understanding of what is to come to insert that information here.

In the meantime Heinz grew up in England with his foster parents. At first he keeps on writing letters to his parents, but then one day his letter comes back with the post mark: moved away - left no forwarding address---

At eighteen he is required like all other young men to report for military service. After going over his papers and seeing that he is Jewish and born in Germany, his superior advises him to change his name, just in case he is ever captured by the Germans. So Heinz receives his new papers with the name Heinz Michaelsohn changed to a more English sounding name - Henry Morton.

Heinz or Henry is sent to the Middle East, a trouble spot for years, to relieve some of the Mandatory forces. Right after the end of war he

tries everything, to find out whether his family survived the camps. He gets in touch with the Red Cross but is told that they can't help him right now. Other Jewish organizations tell him it will take quite some time before they can put together a list of survivors - after all they are scattered all over Europe. So there is nothing else to do for the time being but wait and hope.

Many months later some of the first illegal transports arrive in Palestine. He is shocked to hear what some of his army buddies tell of their experiences when they liberated some of the camps. Is there only the faintest hope, that his family survived these brutalities and privations? And he is stationed here not only to keep peace between Arabs and Jews, but to help prevent Jewish survivors to come to Palestine after years of suffering. What a job he is asked to do-----

"For days I notice I have plugged-up ears. I can hardly hear anything. The army doctor diagnosed my trouble as a leftover from a case of hunger typhus. It is no wonder I am that sick when you remember that my weight at the time I am liberated, is down to 96 lbs. from about 165 before camp.

The next few days and weeks roll by slowly. Every day the same routine. Breakfast, doctors coming by, lunch, etc. Little by little I get stronger and can even walk to the park surrounding the hospital. When you sit down and have time to think and somehow relive the past, you don't see the barbed wire anymore, but sometimes you think you hear the screaming voices of the S.S. guards giving orders, or the sound of a whip for not following their orders fast enough. Especially the nights are terrible. There is hardly a night when you don't wake up sweating and trembling from a dream about camp.

The American army doctors and G.I.'s are really doing everything possible to make us feel that we are free again, and treat us like human beings. In the evenings they bring us cigarettes, chocolate bars, beer chewing gum - things we didn't see for years. They bring to us a dentist and even a barber. But it will take quite some time before we will use a barber's service with our "skinned haircuts."

Among the many patients is a Hungarian accordion player. He is small and hunchbacked, and was a music teacher back in Budapest. The Americans provide him with an instrument, and man can he play. The reason he is still alive is that he played in the camp orchestra every day when we marched out to work and in the evenings when we marched our starved and exhausted bodies back to camp. And on Sundays he had to play before the camp-commandant and the S.S. guards to entertain them.

One day some army trucks arrive at the hospital with P.O.W.'s in Hungarian uniforms. As we find out they are all officers and doctors and are supposed to help relieve the American doctors, since they can't handle all the patients, who are brought from all over, anymore. With the first confrontation between the Hungarian doctors and the Jewish doctors we almost have a fight going on. The latter had to suffer in the camps thanks to the cooperation of the Hungarians. Other Hungarian patients refuse to be treated by the Hungarian doctors and call them traitors who fought against the Allied forces during the war.

On the other hand we meet a German who was a translator for the German army and had dared to speak his mind against Hitler and his regime. Before the war he lived with his family in Canada and during one of his visits to Germany got stuck and the army grabbed him. He was brought as a political prisoner to the Dachau camp and liberated with all the others. His wife and

children are sitting in Canada and don't know a thing about him or where he spent the war years. We get real friendly with this man - after all, he is one of the few who can understand what we went through.

Today we get our first "pocket money." We act like happy children who receive their first allowance. A group of us decide to go the next day to the nearby town to buy a few things. It feels funny to walk through the streets without fear that somebody might push you off the sidewalks or call you dirty names. Even the years before camp were rough enough with our being forced to wear the Judenstern and all the ordinances to make our lives miserable. The Town is pretty much destroyed, but somehow I can't feel sorry for the people living here. They now look at our still starved faces and bodies with a pitiful look. They should have done so a few years earlier, then one of the greatest injustices of all times wouldn't have happened. And our only fault was being born Jewish...

And nobody can tell me the citizens of this town didn't know. Around here five or six concentration camps existed, with the most infamous of them all DACHAU. And didn't the people here wonder where the approximately 650 inmates in striped uniforms came from, when we had to work like dogs to remove the ruins from the railway tracks damaged by the allied air attacks since this was an important railway junction?

And didn't the people here wonder when, after a hard days work we dragged our starved bodies back to camp, many times half carrying our fellow inmates, to save them from punishment from the guarding S.S. men? What did they think at the time - that we were a volunteer commando, trying to help Hitler win the war?

In the stores here they treat us with kid gloves. They even offer us bread and cheese without any ration cards. What do you know! When it comes

to exchange money, we act a little clumsy. We have to get used to it to be totally free again.

Saturday is going to be a big surprise for us. We see trucks rolling in with cases of beer. At dinner we are asked to meet in the largest barrack. Of course we are curious to find out what's going on. In front a band plays music for dancing, hired by the army from the nearby town. Our Hungarian accordion plays with them. Everybody gets a bottle of beer and the dancing starts. I also get up and start dancing at first a little clumsily, but after a little while I get used to it again. I ask one of the nurses who take care of me for a dance. Then they play a special number, a czardas, for the Hungarians. Even the convalescent Hungarians take part. It is a good feeling to enjoy life again.

In the meantime it is June and I spend more and more time in the fresh air. The hospital is run by Catholic nuns and has big orchards, cattle and chicken-bins. As an old "farmer" of course I am interested in looking around and somehow keeping busy. The hospital also has a wing for patients with mental disorders, everything run by the nuns who are so devoted to their work of love.

Time flies. I am getting stronger again and I have to start thinking about what I am going to do in the future. We still have former inmates of camps arriving daily for treatments and to recuperate and we have to make room for them here. What am I going to do? I have no desire to go back to Berlin, where I spent all my life but which now has mostly bad memories for me. And I have a better chance of immigrating from here in the American zone to Palestine or elsewhere, than from Berlin. In the meantime we hear that in Arolson - wherever that is - a search-center for former camp inmates is being established to bring surviving families together. But how do you get in

touch with the center since the postal system isn't yet functioning?

Another little problem right now is getting clothes. All we have on our backs are the uniforms from the hospital. We go to the mayor of the town and ask for ration cards for clothing. Without trouble we receive them, but buying every day articles is another thing. All the stores are completely empty and we have to try our luck somewhere else. We hitch-hike a ride to another town where we happen to meet a former fellow inmate who goes around with us through the stores. Here a shirt, there a jacket, in another store a pair of socks and handkerchiefs, but a pair of pants is hard to find. The next day we go to another village and meet the mayor who really goes out of his way to make our trip worthwhile.

He gives each of us a suit, a coat, a shirt and blanket, everything donated for the camp survivors by his fellow citizens. With best wishes for our future he says goodbye to us. This is really the first good experience for us after camp. On the way back another farmer asks us to come in and have dinner with his family. We have to show him the tattoos on our left forearms; and tell him about some of our experiences in camp. He and his family are simple people and can't believe that something like that could happen.

We make it back to the hospital and our fellow patients are amazed, that we were able to obtain so many things in no time at all.

But as I said before, we have to make preparations to leave the hospital. Somehow I am able to obtain an old-fashioned wooden suitcase and a used rucksack to put all my newly, so-called "organized", things together. I go to town to get an identification card, and to the hospital to get another certificate showing that I am able to leave and free of all infectious sicknesses. I say goodbye to the doctors and nurses who helped me regain my

health, and to the many friendly soldiers from the American army who helped me find my way back from a starved half-dead concentration camp inmate to a person ready to face the future. With this I take my first step into nowhere...

I am walking to the next best highway trying to hitch hike a ride to Munich. While waiting I meet 2 former fellow inmates who also have no plans for the future. The M.P. (military police) stop every vehicle searching the drivers for weapons and identification. They secure a ride for us and we jump on the back of the truck. After hours, passing destroyed bridges and buildings we finally arrive in Munich. The city is like a ghost-town. Whole districts are flattened, you can look almost from one end of the city to the other. This city with its famous beerhalls, was really the meeting point where Hitler and his earliest faithful clique plotted those devilish plans, which brought Germany into another war and not only annihilated 6 million European Jews, but also killed 5 million other people. And this city, where Hitler put up those magnificent buildings for his 1,000 year Reich, was an early target of the allied forces' air-raids. If Hitler could see his beloved city now, he would turn around in his grave, if he had any conscience.

We walk through the streets filled with ruins still wearing our barrets from the camp. Grim looking people stare at us like they want to say: "You guys still made it - we thought Hitler got rid of all of you." We find our way to a so-called office for refugees to find a place to stay over night. We are told the only place left is a half destroyed former schoolhouse, but that is filthy. So we stay at a former air-raid shelter and try to sleep sitting on a hard bench. After getting up the next morning we walk around the city some more. Munich has really suffered from the war and it will take

years to rebuild the capital of Bavaria. But somehow I can't feel sorry about the miseries of the city, which was known for its support of Hitler.

In the next few days I make up my mind. I know I can't live like a gypsy going from one city to another one, looking every night for a different place to sleep. I am advised to go and talk to a representative of the newly created office of UNRRA (The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency) and state my case. I am told the best thing for me right now would be to go and join a D.P. camp near Munich. Not only would I have a place to live and would have a chance to immigrate perhaps to Palestine or later onto America, but they are also interested in bringing surviving members of families together again.

The D.P. camp itself is a former P.O.W. camp and already very crowded. But it is kept as clean as possible. We meet the first Jewish soldiers of the American army, who offer to send letters to our loved ones abroad, telling them that we made it, since there is no normal postal service as yet. I don't have anyone to write to; the few addresses I might have known before deportation are all forgotten.

Later on the soldiers bring us little packages with cigarettes, chocolate bars and little mezzuzot with chains as good luck pieces. I also receive an identification card with my name, picture, and finger prints and stating my tattoo on my left forearm - "117033." This tattoo seems to be the best identification of all, since nobody can ever take it away from me.

But we also have some other D.P.'s here in camp - Poles, Lets, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians. Remembering how they acted towards their Jewish fellow inmates, we stay away from them as much as possible. They form their own groups and so do we.

The D.P. camp is pretty large. It must have been a former slave labor

camp or something like it, because it is fenced in with barbed wire, which gives you a funny feeling. Jewish armed guards control the maingate, to keep unwanted civilians away. The food is miserable, clothing deficient and the sanitary conditions are terrible. But let's not complain - there is no comparison with what we went through in the concentration camps. What really keeps us going here is hoping to hear from our loved ones that they also made it, and the chance to get out of Germany.

We understand that the U.S.A. has expressed interest in helping to settle a large number of us in Palestine, and later in immigration to the States. But most of us prefer to go to Palestine at this time.

From time to time inspection tours from the UNRRA go through the camp to look at the conditions we are living under. We are moved from our D.P. Camp, which we find out was a former concentration camp, to a newly erected camp. The food and other conditions are much better now. I run into a group of women who were inmates at the AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU camp, which is only about 2 miles from Auschwitz. They told us about the gas chambers being there. About my question as to whether they had contact with middle-aged female inmates, I was told that new arrivals of older women, or women with young children, never made it into the camp. But they didn't know what really happened to these women. That sure gives me something more to worry about.

As I said before most of us wanted to go to Palestine. In England they just held new elections and we wonder how the new government feels about letting a large number of Jewish survivors, with no other place to go, into Palestine. We don't have long to wait. At the end of the year we are told, that England is willing to allow only 1500 Jewish immigrants into Palestine in order not to offend the Arabs. This figure is ridiculous when you think

of all the D.P.'s who are waiting, not only here, but in other camps all over Europe. And when one comes to think back on the earlier Hitler years, when England turned her moral feelings against Germany because of the way the Nazis treated the Jews. But now after the Holocaust that all seems to be forgotten, and keeping the Arabs happy is more important. But it looks as if that's all we can expect right now.

Time is running out. After all the many months of waiting and hoping, I still don't know whether my wife and daughter survived. The information I receive is that the lists of Jewish survivors are not yet completed and that there is still hope for me.

But on the other hand I hear, that at the time of our transport in April 1943, mothers with young children never made it into the AUSCHWITZ camp. They were brought right away in trucks to nearby BIRKENAU and gassed along with women who were not able to do any hard work and sick women.

I know that if my wife had survived, she surely would have found a way to either contact me, or at least to get her name with the others to AROLSEN, a town in the English or American zone, which has a list of all survivors.

And then are times of guilt feeling. Did I really do everything possible to get my family out of Germany in order to save their lives? Why am I the only one of the family who made it?

These days of waiting, hoping and then giving up again can drive you crazy.

Rumors start that a resistance movement is being activated to find a way to somehow get more D.P.s into Palestine. We hear that Ben Gurion, the newly elected chairman of the Jewish Agency, is visiting the D.P. camps in Germany. He is welcomed everywhere as the great Zionist leader he is, and the only man who can do something to improve our life here. He will find out himself how badly all of us want to go to Palestine to start a new life and forget the horrible times under the Hitler regime.

In the summer of 1946, a movement starts to get some of us D.P.s from the American occupation zone to Austria, and later on into Italy. We are told it will be much easier to get us from the Italian coast into Palestine. It is very risky but something has to be done because the D.P. camps are getting more and more overcrowded. I manage to get on one of the transports headed for Austria and Italy. We are loaded onto army trucks and moved to a camp which was taken over by the Jewish Brigade. There we receive food, blankets and some clothing. This was done several times a week, with the empty trucks returning to Austria for more army business. This kind of work -- moving us from camps in Germany through Austria and into Italy -- is done very efficiently and at a great personal risk and sacrifice of the Jewish brigade. Other transports of groups from D.P. camps in Hungary and Yugoslavia are sometimes stopped by Red Army soldiers, but the brigade always has something, like cheap wristwatches, vodka or some leather jackets, handy to keep the Russians happy so that they let the transports go through.

Of course we aren't the only ones waiting to go to Palestine. There are Jewish survivors from Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Czecheslovakia, Yugoslavia and the Ukraine who are also brought into Italy to be closer to Palestine.

In May, 1946, the ship "Haganah" becomes one of the first to bring Jewish survivors illegally to Palestine.

But it is getting harder to get D.P.s across the borders. Jews are happy to

at least leave the countries of their former sufferings and to be brought to camps in the American zone in Germany to wait until they have a chance to go to their final destination. The Jewish Agency supports the camps with money. Some D.P. camps open up agricultural training centers to keep the younger survivors busy and at the same time get them ready for Palestine.

The different D.P. camps get more and more crowded with people wanting to go to Palestine. But the British government won't give in. The don't want to "endanger" their position with the Arabs. New arrivals coming from Poland tell us that even now, after surviving the concentration camps, the Poles abuse them and in some instances have even killed some of their friends. It is hard to understand that even after a war which killed millions of human beings, people didn't learn a thing. But when one goes back into the history of Poland he will find that there was anti-Semitism even before Hitler started his program. So everything is being done to get as many D.P.s as possible out of Poland and into camps in Germany.

Still, some governments suggest that the survivors should go back to their original countries where they were born. After all, the Jews were always good citizens wherever they resided, contributing their knowledge to the daily life of their homelands. And don't forget the many doctors, scientists and inventors who have contributed their knowledge to the world. But that now does seem to have been forgotten. The Letts, Polish and Ukrainian D.P.s have it much easier. Canada, Britain and various South American countries can use them as agricultural laborers, miners or factory workers. But who really wants Jewish merchants, tailors or cobblers right now -- people who went through so much suffering during the last few years?

The ship "President Garfield," acquired by the Haganah and renamed "Exodus 1947" to bring Jewish immigrants to Palestine, is caught by the Birtish and turned back to Europe. Underground movements in Palestine retaliate by blowing up bridges, roads, and in the biggest attack, by blowing up the "King David Hotel" in Jerusalem burying a hundred civilian personnel and British officers beneath the ruins.

In the meantime, as we understand it, other old surplus ships are being bought or leased somewhere in the Northwest United States by "dummy corporations" sailing under the Panamanian flag. One ship, for example, was originally built in 1905 as an ice breaker and later used as a training ship on the Great Lakes. The crews of these ships, mostly old tubs, are for the most part Jewish volunteers. The licensed officers are paid, but many volunteer also. Once these ships reach the ports of Europe, they are taken over by the Haganah, which brings its own licensed and very well-trained officers and crews. The ships are then rebuilt and outfitted with wood shelfing making berths about 3 feet by 6 feet and three to four tiers high. Their only purpose is to get as many D.P.s as possible to Palestine by any means available. Comfort therefore, is not too important a consideration.

Even though President Truman is in favor of the immigration of more than 100,000 D.P.s to Palestine, the State Department is hostile to immigration because of British political pressure. The British are always looking for these ships, and telling the State Department that they were purchased in the U.S.A. for the sole purpose of illegally moving people to Palestine with American crews supporting such efforts. In any case, these ships arrive in Europe under the greatest difficulties in June and July. The ships sail through Gibraltar and the Mediterranean Sea. But after some reporters write stories about these ships, the British get alarmed. They trail the ships and have their planes fly over them to

take pictures in order to stop them. Their plan is to photograph the crew and the Haganah officers and show the State Department that there are Americans on the ships. But the crews are smart enough not to carry any American papers, except for one time when a ship is captured and the British find an Irish-American crew member with American flags and other symbols tattooed all over his body, who could hardly deny he was an American. The British take him off the ship and put him into solitary confinement. Of course they also want to know where the ship was sailing to and are told only somewhere in Italy.

But sometimes the British are more successful. Once they capture the much publicized ship, "Ben Hecht," take the entire crew off and place them under arrest.

Sometimes smaller boats, sailing under the Italian flag and looking like fishing boats, manage to get to Palestine packed with about 650 immigrants each. They hold two lifeboats just for appearance. Imagine -- these boats are packed with people -- what could two lifeboats really do for them? But there is so much traffic on the Mediterranean Sea that it is impossible for the British to detect every boat going through.

But then again we hear stories of boats or vessels with illegal immigrants being caught by the British and taken to Cyprus. This island, a few hundred miles from the Greek mainland, is supposed to be terribly hot in summer, with water shortages and barely enough food supplies to take care of so many people. The British chose this place to scare our people and to prevent further illegal immigration. But that won't stop anything. They don't know the determination of these people who have suffered so much and will do anything possible to get to the "Promised Land".

At last my day comes. Days before we are told that a ship is on its way

to bring us finally to our land of hope. We are brought in trucks to a small fishing port in the afternoon and with the beginning of darkness are brought in small fishing boats and rubber rafts to the waiting ship. I guess we must be about 1400 or so people. We get our orders that in case the ship is captured we are not to resist the British. During daylight we are not allowed to stay on deck. The crew is dressed the same way we are. A smart move -- in case the ship is captured, how can they tell who is a survivor, or who is part of the crew? The spirits are high, there is singing and dancing. Sanitation is O.K., medical care available and there is hardly any trouble getting volunteers to help in the kitchen and on other work details.

After about two days or so on the water, we notice another ship nearby, going the same direction as ours. We zigzag aroung a little bit to take a slightly different course and some of us get seasick. I get headaches, but for some reason I just can't throw up. I don't feel like eating anything, just take some liquids from time to time.

Finally, at daybreak on the 3rd day we can make out from far away the coastline of Palestine. What a moment for all of us! All the hardships of the last few years are suddenly forgotten, and right in front of us is Palestine, the only country in the world which is really willing to take us in. But we celebrate too soon. About three miles off the coast our ship is sighted and captured by the British, and hauled into the port of Haifa by two destroyer escorts. There is no way to escape. Normally there are ways to delay capture. For instance, the steps leading to the wheelhouse are surrounded by barbed wire and people all around. In order to control the ship one has to make it to the engine room. That means cutting through the barbed wire, pushing through hundreds of people, and possibly using force on the way to control the ship, all of which of course takes time. But just before the British got on the ship, the steering mechanism

broke, otherwise we would have been able to drag even the destroyers into the port with us and we would have made it. What a disappointment! We are transferred together with the crew to another ship and sent to Cyprus.

Arriving in Cyprus we realize that we are not the only ones captured by the British. We hear another ship, the "Northland," with about 2500 immigrants on board, plus some other smaller boats, were recently captured for a total of more than 10,000 people. Again we are put behind barbed wire into a former P.O.W. camp. It is terribly hot here. It must be the hottest season of the year. But in all our disappointment, we know we are a step closer to our goal. At least we are out of Germany and Europe, which have so many bad memories for all of us.

Here is Cyprus most of the civilian personnel working for the British are Jews, who are very sympathetic to our cause. Though they tell us that we might be held here for many months and released only according to the legal monthly quota which is set by the British at 1500 a month, they really do everything possible to make life easier for us. The rules set here are that when your turn comes, the British take you from the P.O.W. camp back to another detention camp near Haifa called "Athlit," where one has to stay for about one to two months before finally being released. To get the crew of the captured ships back to Palestine, the civilian personnel change the names of released survivors with the names of the crew, or one of the crew takes on the name of another man in order to get back to his ship, all because these dedicated men are immediately ready to go and get another shipload of survivors. Next time they will try to bring people over from Rumania and Bulgaria, so they tell us.

The first weeks go by terribly slow. There is really nothing to do but wait. In the evening we come together for discussions, and after it cools down even try some dancing. But the real spirit isn't with us. We want to settle

down for good after all the experiences of the last few years. Another ship of captured survivors is brought to Cyprus and the total of people staying here swells to almost 20,000.

Finally, on November 20, 1947, the General Assembly of the United Nations votes for the partition of Palestine into two states, one Jewish and the other one Arab. There is celebration all over the world wherever Jews live, with people dancing in the streets of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and New York. Here in Cyprus after the good news the reaction is hard to describe. Husbands and wives, grown up men, teenagers, and children all cry on each other's shoulders. Much later this first reaction turns to a happier one. There is singing and dancing again. Now we know things will go much faster for us and it won't take much longer until we will be able to go to the land of our dreams.

In the meantime there is turmoil in the Middle East. The Arabs are dead set against the United Nations decision, and do everything to prevent the execution of the plan. Neighbors, Jews and Arabs alike, who have lived together in peace for all these years, are now furiously at each other's throats. The Palestinian Arabs call for a protest strike and Jews all over the country are attacked and killed, and their homes and synogogues burned down.

Great Britain announces that she intends to give up the mandate in Palestine in the near future and is willing to pull out her troops sometime in May. Things are getting worse; free-for-all fighting seems to engulf the whole country. The Haganah forces together with Palmach troops, outnumbered in men and military equipment, fight it out in every Kibbutz, moshav and village. Often the Arabs are able to get their supplies of arms without too much trouble. Some voices hint that British forces are involved in some weapon's deals. But the Arabs don't have the fighting spirit like the Jews have. Our people are willing to fight to the last man or woman to defend their piece of land.

Highways leading to towns and kibbutzim and supplying settlers with food and weapons change hands many times. Losing would mean the end of our dreams of a land of our own, a new homeland for the thousands of Holocaust survivors from all over Europe, the remains of a once great and influential Jewry. If it wasn't for the underground suppliers of the most needed defense materials, it would be a lost fight.

After Great Britain's announcement, life here in Cyprus seems to ease up and time seems to pass much faster. The legal quota is transferred monthly, and the number of people interned here for many months quickly dwindles. And then, at the end of January, our transport is put together. Our names are called and we are ready to be transferred to the "Athlit" camp. We go on board one of the older British troopships. The ship leaves shore, we are really sailing, we are finally on our way to our own land. For many of us who might have had a chance to leave Germany before World War II, but didn't make it in time because of quota or permit regulations, this is finally the end of our travels.

Singing begins, and somehow a blue and white flag is hoisted and all our voices unite in singing the Hatikvah. And in front of us after many months of hoping and waiting appears the coastline of our promised land."

Alfred: Here ends the diary of Heinz' father, and I must finish his tale.

Heinz' father got involved in a new life of unrest and fighting for survival as soon as he arrived in Palestine. He joined a group of Holocaust survivors who were starting a new kibbutz near Jerusalem. The work was hard -- from dawn to late at night working the rock-hard ground, making it useable for planting trees and vegetables. Water was scarce, and could be used only for the most important necessities.

At nighttime the men had to stand watch to protect the kibbutz from Arab neighbors who not only resented the Jewish pioneers, but were also jealous of the progress they made from week to week. Many times the "kibbutzniks" were called upon to rush down to nearby strategic highways or towns to fight off sudden Arab attacks. Heinz' father knew very well how important it was to stand up and fight for one's rights after having been deprived of his for so many years.

But nobody can escape his own fate. During one of the almost daily attacks in a nearby town, Heinz' father was severely wounded. After surviving hell in Auschwitz and other camps, he realized his life was ending. Onrushing British troops tried to restore peace and take the wounded to a hospital. While being helped into an ambulance, the dying man recognized the ring on one of the soldier's fingers -- the ring Heinz received from his grandmother on the day of his Bar Mitzvah. Heinz and his father met again after so many eventful years in such a tragic way. In tears, Heinz promised his dying father that after finishing his time in the British army, he would return to the newly established State of Israel, and as the only survivor of his family, to help build up the country and make it a haven for other people to follow.

THE END